

# Movie Makers

November - December 2005

Volume 15 No 6

*The American Motion Picture Society*

*Sponsors of the world's longest continuing film and video festival*

[www.ampsvideo.com](http://www.ampsvideo.com)

## Making "Together with Yoda" by Willy Van der Linden

Winner Travel Genre & Second Overall

Belgium, my home country, is close to the British Isles and as an Anglophile I spend my vacations there. I love visiting England, Scotland and particularly Ireland, perhaps because I was born on St Patrick's Day.

Two years ago I decided to make a film about that most English part of Britain, the Cotswolds where I had spent a Christmas vacation. My aim was to tell people about this charming area of gentle hills that roll eastwards from the Welsh mountains toward Oxford. I was fascinated by the beauty of the Cotswold villages, picture postcard places with names to match; Chipping Campden, Broadway, Stow-on-the-Wold, Northleach and Painswick. Built from the local golden limestone these villages are jewels unlike anywhere else in the world.

I started reading books about the Region, visited the Cotswold Tourism website, and bought "Cotswold Life" magazine as I wanted to know the background and where and when special local events took place. Using my research I prepared a lively script, some makers of travel films just take shots of streets, squares, buildings and monuments and then tack on a commentary. This was something I wanted to avoid so I asked Colin Howett, a retired English sailor who has lived in Belgium for thirty years to be our on-camera guide and to record the commentary. Colin went to the Cotswolds with me and drove an old Triumph TR4 sports car accompanied by a well trained papillon dog, Yoda. To avoid quarantine problems I had to find a dog in England, discovered for me by Lee Prescott, the AMPS representative in Britain.

The car rarely went anywhere as it was borrowed and available for only eight hours so we rocked the car with Colin and Yoda on board and gently rolled it down slopes trying to keep up for our shots.

The film was shot using my Sony VX2000 camera, Libec tripod and helped by a Belgian friend who recorded the sound using good quality microphones.

The structure of a film is always important, the opening to show the viewers where the Region is and to

give them the essence of it, then some history, well known local people and present day activities with an ending that satisfactorily wraps up the visit.

The Romans introduced the distinctive long wooled sheep known as Cotswold Lions whose wool earned a fine reputation in the Middle Ages. So I went to a Winchcombe sheep farm in the lambing season and lying in the straw filmed the birth of twin lambs, symbol of the original wealth of the Cotswolds.

I covered the historical background showing the floor of a Roman villa, Hayles Abbey, Gloucester Cathedral, and Sudeley castle where Catharine Parr, sixth wife of Henry VIII is buried. With the help of the staff at Sudeley Castle who opened the back of the crypt for me I was able to get exactly the shot I wanted, I was a very happy film maker. The historical chapter ends at the grave of Sir Winston Churchill.

We then visit towns and villages cut to "Fantasia on Greensleeves" composed by Vaughn Williams who lived in the Cotswolds. The bells of the "wool churches", so called as they were built from the wealth of the medieval wool industry, are impressive. At Fairford the bell ringers practice every Friday night and I got permission, in return for a donation to charity, to stand and film in the center of the eight ringers. Another happy experience.

Then we experience some local events starting with the "cheese rolling competition" where huge, round cheeses are launched down a steep slope and twenty or thirty runners try and catch them before they reach the bottom. Then on to Cheltenham horse races where having a camera in my hand makes me a little reckless. Lying close to the hurdles would give the best shots, it was dangerous but I was willing to take the risk. One of the officials spotted me and asked me to stay behind the rails, but I crept back into the grass to get the exact shots I wanted.

Morris Dancing is the traditional English country dance and I was able to use one of the dancers both in

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conversation with Colin and in the wrap where Colin's car has engine trouble and he cannot go any further, but by then he has shown us the heart of the Cotswolds.

One of the differences between a holiday movie and a travel film is taking the time to wait for months, even years for the right shot. I made five or six journeys



Colin & Yoda prepare for their journey

to England over the two years it took me to get exactly what I wanted for "Together with Yoda".

At each viewing I remember the interesting research and the adventures I had. Now I know the Cotswolds better than many English people and maybe I can be a real Englishman in my next life, just joking!



Ready for the Diet

## Making "The Diet" by Tana Fletcher

Certificate of Merit

"The Diet" was shot with two Bolexes on 16 mm film. Old fashioned? Certainly, and it is not until all the filming is finished and transferred to video that I am back to present technology.

There are many stages before I can start animating. First, I write the script. Then I record the voices of three friends who speak for all the puppet characters in the story. I must now break down every second of dialog into frames. This I do on a picsync winding the magnetic film sound track through frame by frame winding on my dope sheet the number of frames to each word. This enables me to animate the puppet's mouths in lipsync to the dialog.

The puppets are like a troupe of actors with the advantage they can't answer back and without complaint work long hours. Against this, they are a cumbersome lot and in spite of their weighted feet fall about like drunken sailors. As "The Diet" is the twelfth episode in a kind of puppet soap eight of the puppets have regular roles. The rest take on a new character and must be re-painted, re-wigged and very probably have a complete sex change.

Most of the props for both the interiors and exterior sets are from previous episodes. Anything needed specifically for "The Diet" like the stethoscope or benches for the café scene I ask craftsmen (found at craft fairs) to make. To put a set up takes one to several days. The interior ones may need shelves to fix, pictures and curtains to hang and so on. If doors are open or windows present I must put up extra adjoining sets. In the exterior sets roads, fences, trees and flowers and anything moveable must be nailed or stuck down.

Compared to the interior sets the lighting for these is extensive, with layers of light from the background of sky, trees and buildings to my puppets in the foreground.

Once I have worked out how I can make things work and cheat my way round my limitations I draw on my storyboard what I want the camera in each shot to show, adding a note of the camera angles, lenses used and the light meter reading. If I want a CU at the same time as a main Action I use both cameras. I then repeat all the puppet's moves until I am confident I can animate them. All their movements must be converted from real time to animated time. So with a stop watch I do all their movements in real time and then do the sum to calculate the number of frames of animation.

One more job before I can start to animate. Everything I might touch by mistake while animating must be stuck firmly down. This includes chairs, tables and of course every single item on them. "The Diet", with its endless plates of food meant a lot of sticking. Even so the rushes showed several little cakes (impossible to stick down) dancing on their plates.

Now at last I can start to animate. Four seconds of animation may take an hour or more. If, as in the Stay Young Classes I have to move ten puppets every 1/25th of second it will take longer. Isn't that crazy? Who'd be an animator.

When at last the filming is finished my son will edit it which is a lot of fun. We put in the music and sound effects and at last we have a film. Too late now to see how much better I could have made it.

## All at sea

On September 10th the "Radiance of the Seas" sailed out of Vancouver on her way through the Inside Passage North to Alaska. On board were 2100 guests and a crew of 800. Among the guests were a select group of film makers from AMPS and AMMA, aboard to enjoy their joint Festivals plus the Ten Best of the West.

The unsinkable Dicie Sizemore was the Mistress of Ceremonies and her husband, Ken, official still photographer. Dicie runs a smooth show and this was evident from the morning door prizes through to the diplomatic skill with which she found the projectionist who had forgotten to reset his watch on the final morning.

All the winning entries had been compiled onto DVDs ready for projection in show order. David Fuller had transferred all those from AMMA, Magic Moments and TBW and Ned Cordery, those from AMPS. The ship provided a meeting room to seat 60, a ceiling mounted video projector and screen of very high quality and a rack mounted DVD player, amplifier, microphone output, even the ability to play VHS tapes. The system was NTSC so all the PAL entries had been transcoded and generally played very well. Far gone are the days of 8mm, Super 8mm, 16mm even 9.5mm film and later those variations on video tape, SVHS, VHS, miniDV. Welcome DVD, the answer to the projectionist's prayers.

The picture and sound quality were first class and there is no doubt that a 3 chip camera, good microphone and a simple NLE system make it possible to produce results we could only dream of in the sprocket days.

The first session was on Monday, from 9 am to 5 pm, the second on Thursday from 9 am to noon and the third on Friday from 9 am to 4 pm. These were days when the ship was at sea so we weren't missing very much in terms of scenery although given the quality of the food and drink there was a noticeable reduction in attendance in the afternoons.

We had two speakers, Miles Walker and Mark Levy.

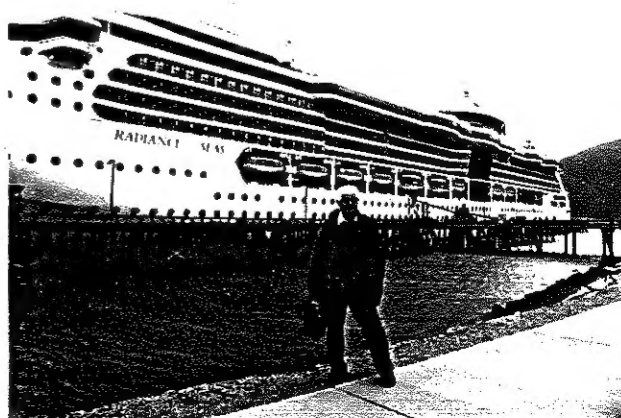
Miles is a professional graphic artist, owner of a well known studio based in Vancouver. His presentation was on how to get the best from cameras and NLE systems, particularly in terms of their artistic potential. His presentation was very visual with examples of the possibilities both from the professional and non-commercial worlds. He even showed us how to make visual poetry from all those "darn it I've shot my feet again" shots of which most

of us have lengthy examples. It was interesting that Miles uses Apple iMovie for his editing and a single chip Canon to shoot and clearly demonstrated, yet again, that it's really all down to the person rather than the equipment. His presentation was thought provoking, informative and entertaining and gave us an artist's take on movie making for fun.

Now to Mark Levy's presentation. I must tread warily, after all Mark is an attorney specializing in Intellectual Property law so I took notes. In American copyright law there is a clause that covers what is termed "Fair Use" and through this loophole there seem to be some possibilities. First, any work done for financial gain cannot claim Fair Use, it is really provided for educators and critics. As non-commercial movie makers belonging to non profit organizations with education as a part of our stated objectives perhaps we can slip in here, and many do! I am not sure if Mark is willing to go in to print on this, after all what lawyer wants his own words on paper to haunt him. My reading of his comments, and this is my non-legal, not to be followed version is that it is OK to use commercial music/film clips provided there is no financial gain and you will not cause financial loss to the owner of the copyright, can claim educational value and the number of copies/audience are small. However, I don't think this will work in an International competition. By the way, Mark will not defend you if it all goes pear shaped.

Last but not least, thanks to Harold and Mary Cosgrove who made this seaborne n-c Festival (a first I think?) possible. A good one HalMar, although I am now on a strict diet and receiving professional help to overcome the withdrawal symptoms. Thanks also to Melissa of Royal Caribbean who took care of us movie makers and the crew of the ship who fed us to saturation and safely took us on our journey.

Ned Cordery



Me and my ship



## Uniquely UNICA by Dave Watterson

Good movies, great company, grand sightseeing – all packed into one wonderful week, that's UNICA.

Blankenberge in Belgium is a seaside resort with a large casino and entertainment complex on the sea-front. More than 400 delegates from all over the world packed in for screenings, banquets, workshops and fun. The building buzzed with conversations, people comparing camcorders and gadgets, vendors demonstrating kit and lots of laughter.

The best movies for me?

**Medianeras (Between Walls)** - from Argentina. It begins like a critical study of city-planning in Buenos Aires, where uncontrolled development allows tower blocks, whose blank walls have huge advertisements on them. In bleak dark apartments people knock through their own illegal windows. The movie then slips into an electronic love story with lots of gentle humor and finishes with the two would-be lovers staring out of their "illegal windows" – hers is at the point of an arrow saying "Here is what you need" and his at the crotch of a pair of Speedos!

**Marco P. Izlodzię Rowerow (Marco P. and the Bicycle Thieves)** – a Polish comic masterpiece where an obsessive racing cyclist goes on the rampage Tarantino style when his precious bike is stolen.

**De Komische Treurnis Van Teun Hocks (The Comical Sadness of Teun Hocks)** – a remarkable study of the Dutch artist, who builds real tableaux for his scenes, places himself in them then photographs the result before making his paintings. By first showing only isolated sections of each painting the film maker drew attention to the comedy in them and then to the sadder side as the whole image was revealed.

The USA was welcomed back into membership of UNICA this year at the AGM during the week-long festival. Sadly it coincided with the Alaska Cruise so no one from AMMA or AMPS (who jointly represent the USA) could attend. That's how I became a "Scottish Yankee" for the occasion standing in for Nora Serra who will be the delegate at UNICA in South Korea next year.

The US Program was well received, though it did not collect any medals. **First Concert** was touching, **Feeding Frenzy** was a riot for those who understood the words – it would have gone better with subtitles in French and German. **Ann and Celeste** got a lot of respect.

I guess that in the USA, as in the UK, we sometimes feel that our work cannot match the "arty" standards of other lands. That's false. Our work stands up well and is enjoyed a lot. The joy of UNICA is seeing what subjects other people tackle and how they handle them. When a great movie appears – and there are many at each UNICA – the whole audience gives a sigh of satisfaction before the laughter, tears or applause. We all love the

best movies regardless of where they come from. UNICA has three official languages: French, German and English. Luckily for us English is the most common second language for people from many different lands. Put Croat, French, Czech and Scots film makers together and they communicate in English, smiles and sign-language. Most subtitles are in English.

Film programs are entered by national organizations and there is a special award for the "most interesting program" which was won by Germany against stiff competition. A jury of seven people drawn from UNICA member countries watches the films with the audience. Every couple of hours three of them go on stage and give their first impressions of what they have seen. At the end of the week the jury draws up a short list of top films, discusses them publicly in more detail and votes on whether to award medals.

It is not all sitting in the dark

The festival organizes outings. One was to the beautiful, art-filled town of Bruges where we had tours on the canal system and through the ancient centre before a grand meal and beautiful classical concert. The other was to Ypres where the reconstructed Medieval city vies for attention with the amazing exhibition experience called "In Flanders Field" which puts you into the trenches of the first and second world wars. It is a moving and unforgettable visit completed by the playing of "The Last Post" at the city's Menen Gate. Our dinner in the ancient cloth hall afterwards was fine, but delegates were a little subdued by what they had seen and heard.

Various groups of cine and video clubs in Belgium took turns to ply us with their regional specialties ... meltingly delicious chocolates and scrumptious buns. Countries hosting future UNICA festivals offered receptions with appropriate drinks and snacks.

You've got to come!

Most UNICA festivals are in the European area and a long haul from the USA, but if you have any other excuse to be close by – visiting family, doing business – do try to attend one. You will find yourself among friends and quickly wondering how a week can fly past so fast. You may also be inspired. At the final banquet a Belgian lady who investigates fraud in the diamond industry met a German couple and started to plan a thriller. You never can tell what will happen at UNICA!

Future UNICAs are:

2006 21st August - 3rd September (South Korea)

2007 1st – 9th September Liptovský Mikuláš (Slovakia)

2008 22nd to 31st August Hammamet (Tunisia)

*Dave is a well-known judge at amateur film festivals in Britain and Europe. As well as representing the USA at UNICA he was on the jury. He is an AMPS member.*

## 77th AMPS Festival 2006 - Las Vegas NV

Thanks to all the entrants in the 2005 Festival. A high standard in both technical quality and creativity has set a challenge for us all. Now it is on to the 2006 Festival, the entry forms and rules are available on the AMPS website ([www.ampsvideo.com](http://www.ampsvideo.com)) so you can start planning now.

The Festival will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada in early October 2006. Full details of the dates and venue will be posted in the next issue of Movie Makers.

**This will be a joint Convention with the Ten Best of the West and AMMA.**

### AMMA 2005 Festival Results

#### The Top Ten

**Butterfly** Norm Otto USA  
Also winner of the Oscar V Horowitz award to an AMMA member of over two years

**An Act of Con-fidence** Pam & Walt Gilmore USA  
**Chemainus** Pam & Walt Gilmore USA  
**Galapagos Wildlife** Kay Bamford-Burnell UK  
**The House on the Rock** Lee Agnew USA  
**Hong Kong (BC)** Bill & Mary Ann Leeder USA  
**Istanbul** Bill & MaryAnn Leeder USA  
**Petra** Pat & Brian Deakin NZ

#### Rebel

**What is that?**

Barry McKnight & Roger Cowlland Aus  
Brenda Lantow USA

#### Honorable Mention

**Ketchikan-dor** Pam & Walt Gilmore USA  
**My Shortest Movie** Oskar Siebert Germany  
**The Rainbow Raider** Barry McKnight & Roger Cowlland Aus  
**River of Life** Pat & Brian Deakin NZ

There were a total of 41 entries from 9 countries.

### News flashes

**2005 Festival** - Now available, a set of **three DVDs** with a selection of the winning entries. Each DVD runs for just over an hour so that a club viewing can be programmed or a personal viewing can be enjoyed in manageable sessions. These DVDs are available for loan to members of AMPS. We ask that you keep them no longer than three weeks. E-mail to [ned@ampsvideo.com](mailto:ned@ampsvideo.com) to arrange your loan. Included with each loan will be a short form for you to review the movies and return. We will collect these comments and share them with the film makers.

**Newsletter** - the response to the suggestion that we go to an e-mail distribution using .pdf files has been very low so we will stick with the print version for now. However, with rising printing and mailing costs we will have to revisit this sometime in the future.

#### HDV - Interview with BBC technician.

Q. How does the quality of the Sony Z1 HDV camera stand up to other cameras you use?

A. The quality of the Z1 image is astonishingly good, far superior to Sony's PD 170 DVCAM cam-

era or even Digital Betacam. I'd recommend it without hesitation. The BBC is replacing all the PD170s with this camera. It has proven both robust and easy to use for almost anyone. It takes video production on from where DV took it to 10 years ago.

Q. How does HDV stand up to editing?

A. We have been cutting everything on FCP and it works great. No problems whatsoever.

The Sony HDR-FX1 camera is the "amateur" equivalent, it has the same lens and CCDs but mini plug audio input and fewer manual controls. For a full comparison visit:

<http://home.earthlink.net/~dvcnyc/Sony%20HDR-FX1.htm>

**Canon** have now announced an HDV camera, the XL H1, having missed the HDV boat at the 2005 NAB Show. Similar to the XL2 but with 1080i/60 as well as SD recording and all black finish, 20x HD lens. Priced at around \$9,000 available in December. For more info go to:

[www.consumer.usa.canon.com](http://www.consumer.usa.canon.com) go to camcorders  
[www.dvinfo.net](http://www.dvinfo.net) go to XL H1 site

## Technical tips by George Henderson

**Removable drive trays** - if your computer tower has available 5.25" drive bays with front access then install Mobile Docks for removable drive trays. I have two separate boot drives, one for everyday personal work and the second optimized for video work. The video drive does not have any anti-virus, firewall etc. In fact I recommend disconnecting from the Internet when editing with a possible 30% to 50% increase in speed without those background programs running. I create two partitions on the video boot drive, one for the OS and the other for temporary data storage. Docks/trays are available for IDE and SATA drives, I use a system manufactured by SanMax ([www.sanmax.com](http://www.sanmax.com)) available at Fry's and CompUSA. Trays cost about

\$10 each, so I keep half dozen data drives formatted and ready to go. Every time a local vendor has a great deal on hard drives I buy one and mount in a tray ready for use.

**MonoPod/Hiking stick** - the Jacko Royal hiking stick costs just \$35 (\$40 with anti shock spring) It has a removable hardwood grip knob that unscrews to reveal a standard camera mounting thread. The stick comes with both carbide and rubber tips ready for both woodland and urban trekking I used my Jacko Royal on a recent vacation in Costa Rica, my camerawork has never been so steady! ([www.jackopoles.com](http://www.jackopoles.com)) (Editor - I have ordered one)

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### Practical equipment/software review

#### Vegas Studio

Editing programs have developed into solid, dependable software, but along the way have acquired many additional features aimed at the professional broadcaster. The result is a two tier system of software, FCP5, PremierPro, Liquid Edition, Avid Xpress DV and Vegas 6 at the top end and iMovie, Premier Elements, Pinnacle Studio and Vegas Studio at the bottom end. I use FCP as my standard but have an office PC that has always had a back-up edit program, just in case. With the death of my old standby, Cinestream, I needed a PC based program and after some research selected Vegas Studio, now with an upgrade to the Platinum release.

This is available as a complete package, Movie Studio+DVD, Sound Forge Studio for sound editing, Acid Music Studio for music creation, and at about \$200 this is excellent value. What is the difference between these lower cost packages and their big brothers? They lack the ability to create Edit Decision Lists (EDLs), and other formats necessary for the transfer of information between systems. They usually have a limited number of video and audio tracks, some of them will not batch capture and have limited color correction, but in other areas they are feature rich, transitions, FX, titling, integrated DVD creation etc.

In one vital respect Vegas Studio Platinum is ahead of the game, it has the ability to edit HDV 1080i as used by Sony, not surprising as this is Sony software but certainly surprising at this price.

Of course to edit HDV we need a computer to go with this software and a recent sale of a dual core 2.8 mHz, 1 Gb RAM, 230Gb HDD and a 19 inch LCD Gateway at Costco rolled Christmas and birthday into one (for the next three years I am told). For regular SD my old 2.0 mHz, 512 Mb RAM (now retired) worked perfectly.

If you are used to the usual interface of two picture windows, Clip and Program (Viewer and Canvas) then be prepared for something different, a single video window bottom right below the timeline. A limitation is that you can have either the window or an external monitor active, not both. Clips are called "events", I wish that the NLE software writers could agree on a universal designations. There are enough transitions and FX to create stuff for MTV and the sound editing is OK with Sound Forge Studio standing by for any audio sweetening. Applying transitions is novel, pull the end of the clips over each other for the required length, apply transition, review in real time. I haven't tried the Acid Music yet. The titling is powerful and easy to use, vastly superior to FCP3.

This looks to be an excellent value package and will take most n-c editors through whatever they want to do including some quite ambitious compositing. As I climb the learning mountain I will report in from time to time but for now if you want an inexpensive package with a lot of potential this looks good.

## Editor's thoughts.

Thanks to two of the winners in this year's AMPS Festival who have written of the experience of making their entries. These are two very different films, Willy Van der Linden's "Together with Yoda", a visit to the Cotswold area of England and Tana Fletcher's stop motion puppets in "The Diet". Very different indeed, but with something in common and to be found in all the winners.

A clear vision, meticulous preparation and then perseverance and attention to detail. Both these films are rich in these elements of successful film making. Willy spent two years gathering the shots for his film and Tana spends hours measuring and counting before days of careful work animating her puppets, one frame at a time.

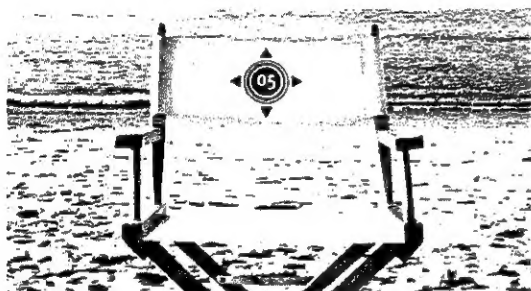
As you can see the competition was fierce this year with a crop of superb films and we have more "making of" articles on their way so that we can watch the movies, read the background here in "Movie Makers" and learn from the winners.

A big thank-you to Dave Watterson who represented the USA at the recent UNICA meeting held at Blankenberge, Belgium. Dave is a Scot, presently living in England and has been a member, friend and helper to AMPS for some years and took on the task of the combined AMPS-AMMA re-entry into UNICA on our behalf. He hands over to Nora Serra who will be the USA representative at the next UNICA meeting in Korea, 2006. Thanks Dave and we look forward to your continued support. Thanks Nora for taking over.

Another big thank-you to the AMMA Festival Chair, Harold Cosgrove and his wife Mary for organizing the "Festivals at Sea". Thanks also to Dicie Sizemore who MC'd the meeting, grand job. A good time was had by all and we got to visit new places, experienced the sights and sounds of Alaska and discovered Vancouver, certainly one of N America's finest cities. We also found time to watch the movies!

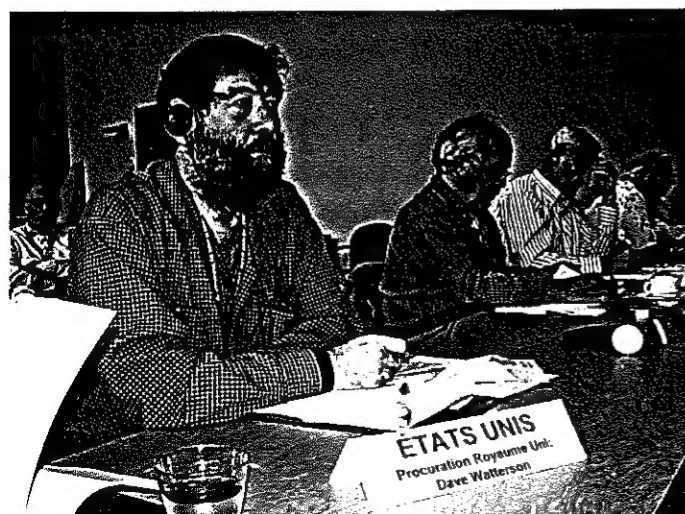
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UNICA 2005



UNICA 2005  
Blankenberge  
Belgium

photographs by  
Dave & Jan  
Watterson



Dave Watterson representing the USA



Yes! We are here



Dicie & Mark Levy

Photos Ken & Dicie Sizemore



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**George W. Cushman**  
Founder  
1909—1996

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**We welcome articles/technical tips/equipment & software reviews for publication in Movie Makers. Please submit copy to the editor by the 20th of the month (Dec, Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct) before publication.**

**Application for Membership**  
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Membership offers these benefits:

The bi-monthly newsletter Movie Makers.  
Reduced entry fees for the annual Festival.  
Festival awards open only to members of AMPS.  
Free loan of Festival winners on DVD.

I wish to join the Society

Annual dues USA	\$10
Annual dues Canada	\$12
Annual dues Foreign	\$13
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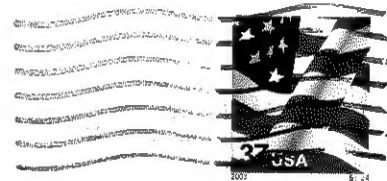
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